

Dear Members of the Connecticut Human Services Committee:

Good afternoon, my name is Alberto Perez and I live in Connecticut. I am 38 and am a resident of East Hartford. I'm a member of the Hartford Deportation Defense. I support **HB 6616: An Act Relating to the Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits for Persons Ineligible Due to Immigration Status.**

In 2020, when the pandemic started, my wife told me to see a dentist for a cleaning. Every time we go to the doctor I have to pay, and I'm the only one who works in our home and I have to pay the bills. I don't like asking the State for anything. I feel that I'm here to get ahead, not to be supported. But I do find it difficult to pay for insurance for the entire family. When /i went to the dentist they did a check-up and told me that I had a white point that they didn't like, and they sent me to Hartford Hospital to do some tests. They told me that they could see the plaque and that it could be something serious, or not. They told me that if it inflamed I'd have to return. A month and a half later I went back because it got inflamed a lot and they had to do a biopsy and they sent me to oncology. That's when they told me that I had a tumor in my mouth, it wasn't malignant but it had grown 5 millimeters. They sent me to UConn for an operation. I told them that I didn't have health insurance and that I couldn't pay the \$40,000 bill that they said it would cost. She told me that it was necessary for me to do the operation. The tumor was eating away at the bone. She sent me an application where I could apply for support. I had to wait for approval, and I had to wait if they could help. They were able to help with the operation bill but I had to pay for the anesthesia and other costs, which cost \$3000 and they gave me a payment plan. There were also other costs for exams, the biopsy, things like that. In total it was \$4000.

Having insurance is absolutely necessary. One can't be doing check-ups regularly because of the costs. My wife also has a ball in her leg and because of the costs doesn't want to get checked. We don't know if they will operate, or how much it would cost. My daughter is 15 and we owe \$5000 for a treatment for her teeth. We are doing monthly payments, as we can. We have to try and see how to pay.

We support this bill because it is a move forward but the conversation needs to continue and we need to keep fighting for everyone's health. Our job doesn't end with the expansion of HUSKY to 26; we need to give access to all immigrants of any age. If one could have access to insurance, they would avoid getting to the point where an illness gets worse. I don't have half of my mouth and it's difficult to eat. If you expand health insurance for immigrants, you can avoid situations like mine.

Thank you,
Alberto Perez